

**Economic and Social Council**Distr.: General
10 June 1999

Original: English

Substantive session of 1999

Geneva, 5–30 July 1999

Item 7 (d) of the provisional agenda*

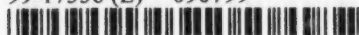
**Coordination, programme and other questions:
international cooperation in the field of informatics****International cooperation in the field of informatics****Report of the Secretary-General****Introduction**

1. The present report summarizes actions taken by the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) following Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/29, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 1999 on initiatives taken by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics. The resolution reiterates the high priority attached to easy, economical, uncomplicated and unhindered access for States Members of the United Nations and for observers, through, *inter alia*, their permanent missions, to the growing number of computerized databases and information systems and services of the United Nations. Furthermore, the resolution underscores the importance of modern information technology for the development activities of the United Nations and the need for global cooperation to ensure a timely and effective response to the year 2000 challenge.

I. Activities of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the need to harmonize and improve United Nations information systems for optimal utilization and accessibility by all States

2. At its substantive session of 1998, the Council requested the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to continue to fulfil, for one year, from within existing resources, the provisions of the Council resolutions on international cooperation in information technology, and to facilitate the successful implementation of the initiatives being taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the use of information technology. As reported in the previous reports of the Secretary-General (E/1996/81, E/1997/88 and E/1998/44), the principal vehicle for delivery of information services will continue to be the Internet. This approach is in line with the policy established earlier by the Information Systems Coordinating Committee (ISCC) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).

* E/1999/100 and Add.1.



3. The Working Group reiterated its support for the use of the Internet as the basis of future development and enhancement of information services provided to Member States. At its meetings, the Working Group focused on the year 2000 problem and issues that relate to providing Member States with better electronic access, including:

(a) The need to further improve electronic connectivity via the Internet for all Member States in their capitals and at major United Nations locations;

(b) The need to intensify efforts to provide electronic connectivity to those Member States that do not currently have this service;

(c) The need for Member States to have improved access to a wider range of United Nations information on economic and social issues, development, political issues and other substantive programme areas, and to have all official documents available via the Internet;

(d) The need for Member States to have improved electronic mail links with the United Nations, with its specialized agencies and with each other;

(e) The need for intensified specialized training for the staff of missions to enable them to take advantage of the facilities being developed for Member States, in particular electronic mail and Internet Web pages;

(f) The need to access United Nations data on-line using low-cost telecommunications links or providing other modalities (for example, CD-ROM) whereby Member States can have access to specialized databases not available on the Internet;

(g) The need to make arrangements, as appropriate, to provide permanent missions of developing countries with the hardware platform to utilize Internet technology;

(h) The need to intensify the use of videoconferencing to further communication and interaction between the United Nations, permanent missions and academic institutions;

(i) The need to address the year 2000 issue within the United Nations Secretariat and to ensure that remedial action is being taken, as appropriate, and that contingency plans are being developed;

(j) The need to build awareness of the year 2000 problem among Member States and provide a platform for Governments to address the issue at the global and regional levels;

(k) The need to broaden access to information at the country level.

II. Action taken by the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme in response to issues raised in the Working Group

A. Facilitating information access and dissemination to missions in New York

4. The United Nations has further intensified its efforts to provide Internet connectivity and access to all permanent and observer missions. The provision of these services is gradually being transferred from UNDP to the Secretariat and is being managed by the Information Technology Services Division, Office of Central Support Services. As of May 1999, about 75 per cent of all missions have been transferred to the service provided by the Secretariat. At the same time, new e-mail accounts are being assigned to missions in the newly created domain @un.int. For missions that were unable to connect to the Internet owing to lack of computer equipment, the United Nations Secretariat continued to provide personal computers, printers and modems. So far, missions have been provided with 32 computers and modems to enable Internet access.

5. The Information Technology Services Division has also installed 13 personal computers in the conference room hall. More are currently scheduled to be installed. This equipment allows members of delegations to access the Internet, check their e-mail and communicate with their missions while at the Headquarters building. To ensure uninterrupted availability of this service to delegates, the Division checks the computers installed in the Delegates' Lounge for proper functioning on a daily basis.

B. Facilitating information access and dissemination in country locations

6. At the country level, UNDP pursues a number of objectives in information and communications technology which build on the activities described in the previous report (E/1998/44):

(a) Providing access at the country level to substantive information, knowledge and best practices;

(b) Promoting connectivity and access;

(c) Developing Web sites for information for development;

(d) Promoting development and empowerment through information technology;

(e) Initiation networking in developing countries;

(f) Supporting technical cooperation at the regional level.

7. As part of its efforts to provide access to information at the country level, UNDP has developed "knowledge broker" Web sites. Designed as a "one-stop shop", the sites offer, through well-structured hyperlinks, access to a wealth of practical information, relevant content material, curricula and solutions on a broad range of aspects of sustainable human development through lead articles and a plethora of hyperlinks.

8. The key sites, managed by the UNDP Bureau for Development Policy, are the INFO21 Web site at <http://www.undp.org/info21> and the Sustainable Development Networking Programme Web site at <http://www.sdn.undp.org>. These sites have been combined and linked with another international site located at <http://www.knowledgebroker.org>. Together, these Web sites constitute a global storehouse of development information and solutions for local communities, Governments, development practitioners, researchers, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, especially small and medium-sized businesses. They reduce the otherwise lengthy search time on the Internet for appropriate information, which invariably is expensive and in many cases unaffordable.

9. Special topical sub-sites of the INFO21 site offer detailed content and information on human rights, the Y2K problem, electronic commerce and Internet governance issues. Other sites are maintained by the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries and the Subregional Resource Facility (SURF) and can be accessed on the central UNDP Web site (www.undp.org/toppages/discover/index.html).

10. In cooperation with the Government of Brazil, the UNDP Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries initiated the development of an Internet-based system, called the Web of Information for Development (WIDE). The goal of the WIDE initiative is to facilitate access to local expertise within developing countries and to foster South-South collaboration in the sharing of knowledge and skills among developing countries.

11. The initial phase of this project provides on-line and real-time access to information maintained in three key databases: (a) an experts database; (b) an institutions database; and (c) a repository of successful and innovative

experiences. The vision behind this initiative is to create an electronic venue that serves as a communication vehicle, an efficient storage space, a distribution and access site and a collaborative workspace for stakeholders. The development of the system has been completed and the Web site (<http://www.wide.org.br>) will be launched shortly.

12. The UNDP Special Unit has also launched projects for the collection of "innovative and successful experiences", in collaboration with leading agencies such as the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations in the field of science and technology, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in the field of agriculture, food security and related areas, the Third World Network in a range of social, economic and environmental areas, and the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration in the priority areas of Small Island Developing States. The experiences compiled under this initiative are being captured in WIDE. Through the WIDE system, institutions will continue to be encouraged to share their innovative experiences. The cases will also be disseminated in print-ready format to stakeholders in technical cooperation among developing countries.

13. In 1997, the Bureau for Development Policy of UNDP created the Information Technology for Development Programme. This initiative addresses the development-related issues associated with the emerging global knowledge and information society. The main objectives are to raise awareness among the development partners of UNDP, to promote a better understanding of the potential of information and communications technologies in the development context and to promote the use of information technology as tools for empowering communities and other development stakeholders. The feasibility of different approaches are tested through pilot projects, such as the creation of community telecentres and the development of information technology-based educational and other programmes, especially for women and youth.

14. The scope of the Programme's activities comprises awareness raising, advocacy and policy advice; promotion of connectivity; capacity- and institution-building activities; content development, especially in local languages and in a culturally sensitive manner, and facilitating communications and networking.

15. The use of multimedia community telecentres, especially at the rural level, is being promoted as the central modality to pursue the above objectives. These centres will serve as central hubs for development applications, such as long-distance education, telemedicine, support to small, medium-sized and microcredit enterprises, measures to

enhance good governance, the promotion of e-commerce, environmental management and empowerment of various societal groups, especially women. Pilot projects have begun in Egypt and others will follow soon in South Africa and Burkina Faso.

16. Another project carried out by the Bureau for Development Policy is the Sustainable Development Networking Programme (SDNP), which is a catalytic programme to kick-start networking in developing countries. It emphasizes connectivity, networking and capacity-building as well as knowledge and information sharing with the goal of improving the quality of life. SDNP is currently operational in over 40 developing nations.

17. Through a participatory and multisectoral approach, SDNP promotes national, regional and global networking. It also facilitates and provides Internet connectivity for Government and civil society organizations, supports national network development and promotes content provision and aggregation of national information sources. Moreover, SDNP offers capacity-building programmes through training and skill enhancement activities.

18. One of the activities of the regional bureaux of UNDP in the field of information technology is the Internet Initiative for Africa. The objective is to promote the establishment of Internet services to sub-Saharan Africa as a development modality and as a means to strengthen economic and social development. This project is a part of capacity development for sustainable human development, and falls within the mandate and scope of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It builds on available local expertise for the formulation and implementation of the project. Provision is also made for public and private sector training at the technical and management levels. The Internet nodes that are provided will be open to all interested groups, including public and private sector organizations, Governments, non-governmental organizations and academia.

19. Since its launch in July 1997, the Internet Initiative for Africa has conducted eight Internet assessment missions to the following countries, Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Ethiopia, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria and Swaziland. All missions have resulted in a signed cost-sharing memorandum of understanding between the respective Governments and UNDP. Apart from addressing the funding aspect, these agreements detail the activities to develop Internet access and build technical capacity in the respective countries.

20. In Asia and the Pacific, UNDP has created the Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme (APDIP), based in Kuala Lumpur, which assists Governments, civil

society and the private sector in the region through a variety of training programmes, policy and project advice and networking support. For the Arab States region and the Latin American and Caribbean region, specific regional programmes focusing on information technology policies and projects in support of sustainable human development are under preparation and are expected to be launched in 1999.

21. UNDP is also an active member of a number of international partnerships to advance the promotion of the use of information technology for development purposes. Foremost among these activities is the Global Knowledge Partnership, which emerged from the 1977 Toronto Conference on "Global Knowledge for Development in the Information Age". It brings together on an equal footing some 50 partner organizations, such as Governments, multi- and bilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academic institutions. They are all committed to sharing information, experiences and resources and to launching joint projects on a pilot basis. The Partnership plans to convene another conference on global knowledge for development with the theme "Access, empowerment, governance" in March 2000 in Kuala Lumpur.

22. In 1998, the Secretariat made available 1,065 personal computers and 250 printers. UNDP contributed an additional 60 computers. This equipment was distributed to permanent missions of developing countries to support a variety of technical cooperation projects undertaken by Member States.

C. Electronic dissemination of United Nations information via the United Nations Internet Web server and other related Web facilities

23. The United Nations Web site (www.un.org) is coordinated, maintained and managed by the Department of Public Information with the technical support of the Information Technology Services Division. Established in August 1995, the Web site has grown into a major repository of information about the United Nations and contains links to the Web sites of the United Nations family of organizations. With the latest addition of an Arabic and Chinese language feature in November 1998, the United Nations Web site is now available in all six official languages. In 1997, there were a total of 42.7 million accesses to the Web site, growing to 98.5 million in 1998. By the end of May 1999, there were nearly 58 million accesses.

24. United Nations information centres/services/offices continue to develop local language Web sites to meet the needs of local audiences. Currently, there are 23 such sites worldwide; addresses may be obtained at www.un.org/aroundworld/unics/icpages.

25. On 4 March 1999, exactly one year after the streaming of United Nations daily radio news, the first truly audio-visual Web site was launched (www.un.org/av), offering radio feature programmes with photographs and other graphics as well as audio and video clips. Work is under way to provide more audio-visual content on the Internet, with the expectation that all United Nations radio programming will be available as streaming media by 2003. A pilot study is being undertaken on the feasibility of distributing high-fidelity radio programmes over the Internet. The distribution of high-resolution photographs is being addressed by the Department's implementation of an integrated digital photo system, which will be fully operational in 2003. News coverage by United Nations Television could be made available as live streaming media as soon as the United Nations local area network bandwidth permits and the ancillary technical provisions are made available.

26. *Development Business*, a bimonthly publication of the Department of Public Information, went on-line in early 1999. *United Nations Development Business Online* (www.devbusiness.com), available by subscription only, offers the advantage of a continuously updated and easy-to-use search resource that enables users to quickly identify sales and consulting leads by country, region, sector, bank or type of goods and services.

27. The new "civil society/business" feature of the United Nations Web site (www.un.org/partners), launched in January 1999, seeks to highlight the efforts of the United Nations and its partners in civil society and business in promoting the goals and ideals of the Organization, and provides contact points for more information on the thematic areas of the work programme of the United Nations. Other recent additions include the Economic and Social Council site (www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc), pages on current topics, such as the crisis in Kosovo (www.un.org/ha/kosovo), and new audio-visual material.

28. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library's presence on the Internet (www.un.org/depts/dhl) continues to increase. New features include the electronic newsletter *Depository News Updates*, as well as the "UN system pathfinder", a database guide, launched in March 1999, to major reference sources and frequently requested reports issued by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Existing services have also been expanded. *United Nations Documentation:*

Research Guide (www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide), for example, now includes specialized chapters (international law, human rights, peacekeeping), more detailed explanations (for example, on vetoes in the Security Council) and links to the full texts of General Assembly resolutions. Furthermore, the Library's site has become more multilingual, with documents in Arabic, Chinese and Russian posted since November 1998.

29. A specialized Web site for maps and related resources (intranet/Cartographic/English/htmain.htm) has been launched on the United Nations Intranet. Posting on the Internet for general access is expected shortly. The site contains up-to-date peacekeeping maps, regional and country-profile maps and information on cartographic resources and recent acquisitions of the Map Library.

30. The United Nations CyberSchoolBus (www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus), the educational Web site for young people, continues to be a popular element of the United Nations Web site and was one of 20 finalists, from over 1,400 entries, for the recent Ericsson Internet Community Award. The newsletter on that site has 6,000 subscribers, most of whom are teachers. In 1998, over 700,000 children participated in the interactive projects of the site.

31. The delivery of customized information via e-mail list services continues to grow rapidly throughout the United Nations system. In 1998, the total number of electronically delivered documents was 2.9 million (compared with 1.7 million in 1997). A special service makes 32 electronic publications available to over 5,000 subscribers worldwide. In some cases (the Department of Political Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the World Health Organization), the information is also posted on local bulletin boards and fed directly into on-line databases.

32. As part of its outreach to civil society, particularly in developing countries, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has been conducting regional training programmes for depository libraries to facilitate working with United Nations documents. Two intensive three-day workshops were held in New Delhi and Port of Spain in January 1999, emphasizing access to United Nations electronic information.

D. The optical disk system

33. Since the establishment of the optical disk system in 1993, the number of users at the permanent and observer missions to the United Nations at Headquarters and in government capitals has been growing constantly. As of May 1999, the number of registered user accounts of permanent missions and Member States, mostly in foreign ministries, which allow access to the systems in New York or Geneva, totals 978, more than quadruple what it was in May 1998. The system is also used on a regular basis by staff at most duty stations.

34. The number of documents available on-line has increased by more than 30 per cent over the past year. As of May 1999, more than 108,000 documents in several language versions, 436,000 in total, are stored on the system and can be retrieved around the clock. The range of documents currently available includes:

(a) All United Nations parliamentary documentation since 1993 in all official languages;

(b) Resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council since 1946;

(c) A number of official records of the four main bodies since 1946;

(d) Administrative issuances of the Secretariat;

(e) Documents of the forty-fourth to forty-sixth sessions of the General Assembly.

35. The number of users accessing the optical disk system via the Internet is continuing to increase. Since June 1997, all permanent missions in New York have been able to connect to the system through the Internet. Similarly, users in Member States worldwide rely on the Internet for downloading documents from the system.

36. The constantly growing number of users and documents stored on the optical disk system is stressing the existing technical infrastructure to its limits. The Information Technology Services Division is in the process of assessing a number of alternatives for further improving on-line document access and upgrading the technology in line with the Secretary General's strategy for the creation of an "electronic United Nations", announced in his report on renewing the United Nations (see A/51/950, paras. 244-247). Providing access to information of high quality, at low unit cost, remains a priority of the work programme of the Division.

37. In response to section C of General Assembly resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, a cooperative project was initiated in mid-1998 between the optical disk system and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the retrospective posting of major organ documents on the optical disk system. By the end of March 1999, documents from three sessions (the forty-fourth, forty-fifth and forty-sixth) of the General Assembly had been added to the optical disk system in English.

E. Provision of electronic mail and Web-page hosting services to permanent and observer missions

38. A new server, dedicated exclusively for the use of permanent and observer missions was installed in 1998 by the Secretariat. This server provides electronic mail and Web-page hosting facilities to all permanent missions. In addition to this service, the Secretariat is implementing a remote e-mail access facility that allows users to access their electronic mail through the Internet. This is an ideal tool for individuals who travel and need to access their mail regularly.

F. Specialized Internet training given to the staff of missions

39. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continues to offer its popular CyberSeek Internet course as well as training on the optical disk system for delegates and staff of permanent and observer missions. In addition, a new training option has been developed: a series of subject-oriented and news-gathering courses in Internet searching on such topics as international organizations, environment, sustainable development, human rights and human resources.

G. The year 2000 issue

40. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics has taken the lead in raising awareness among Member States of the nature of the year 2000 problem and the action to be taken. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/233, requested the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session on the steps taken within the United Nations system and with Member States to resolve this problem. The report on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000

date conversion problem of computers submitted by the Secretary-General (A/53/574) details the various initiatives taken by the Working Group to build awareness among Member States and permanent missions of the seriousness of the problem.

41. Furthermore, in resolution 52/233 the General Assembly calls on the Economic and Social Council to prepare guidelines on which Member States may be able to draw in addressing the diverse aspects of the year 2000 problem. To facilitate the work of the Council, the Working Group has drafted guidelines (E/1998/85, annex) summarizing best practices for assessing and solving year 2000 problems and for establishing contingency plans at the national and international levels.

42. The Working Group, alarmed by the discovery that there were major gaps in year 2000 compliance not only among developing countries, decided that it was imperative to convene a meeting of national year 2000 coordinators at United Nations Headquarters before the end of 1998. The joint efforts of the Working Group, the Information Technology Services Division and other United Nations offices, combined with the financial support of the World Bank, made it possible for representatives from more than 120 countries to attend a one-day meeting on 11 December 1998. Also attending the meeting were year 2000 experts from the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Joint Year 2000 Council of the Bank for International Settlements, as well as permanent representatives of missions to the United Nations.

43. The Secretary-General addressed the meeting, calling on the international community to spare no effort to meet the challenge of the year 2000 problem. The Under-Secretary-General for Management delivered the opening presentation on the subject of year 2000 contingency planning. The remainder of the meeting included expert sectoral reports on: banking and finance; telecommunications; nuclear power; oil and gas; shipping and ports; and aviation. An exchange of national experiences and viewpoints on contingency planning and crisis management, followed by a discussion of international strategy, concluded the meeting.

44. One key result of the meeting was the heightened awareness that a regional as well as national and global approach should be adopted to address the issues. This understanding has led to the formation of regional groups and resulted in the Asian group organizing regional meetings and the South American group doing the same under the aegis of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR).

It was felt that a follow-up meeting would be desirable as soon as Member States had set up or refined their national plans and regional groups had reached a conclusion in their evaluation of cross-border problems. Regional groups are scheduled to meet again at United Nations Headquarters on 21 June 1999, and a meeting of the Working Group and the national year 2000 coordinators will follow on 22 June 1999.

45. A special page on the United Nations Web site (www.un.org/members/yr2000) containing information on the year 2000 issue had been established earlier and is regularly updated. Background material related to the above-mentioned meeting and a list of all national year 2000 coordinators has been posted on this site. Independently, UNDP continues to provide, on its Resources Knowledge Web site, a separate and extensive section on the year 2000 problem and its relevance for and impact on developing countries.

III. Concluding remarks

46. In an increasingly networked world, electronic communication and dissemination of information will play a pivotal role. The Working Group, in cooperation with the Information Technology Services Division, the Department of Public Information and UNDP, will continue to improve and expand electronic information services provided to Member States and permanent missions and assure that the technologies employed are abreast with technological development. At the country level, UNDP will intensify its efforts to promote the use of information technology in order to help people to share information, knowledge and expertise that are relevant to sustainable development.

47. Based on the work done during the past year, the Working Group, in cooperation with the Secretariat, other United Nations organizations and the World Bank, will reinforce its efforts to promote year 2000 awareness and contingency planning at the regional, national and international levels. The network of national year 2000 coordinators that has been established will be an important tool for furthering international cooperation in the field of informatics beyond the year 2000 issue.



General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 June 1999

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Item 101 (a) of the preliminary list*
Environment and sustainable development:
implementation of Agenda 21 and the
Programme for the Further Implementation
of Agenda 21

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5-30 July 1999
Item 13 (a) of the provisional agenda**
Economic and environmental questions:
sustainable development

Measures taken in the United Nations system to accelerate progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21

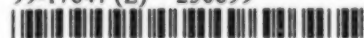
Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/54/50.

** E/1999/100 and Add.1.



Introduction

1. The General Assembly, at its fifty-third session, adopted resolution 53/188 of 15 December 1998, entitled "Implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly", in which the Assembly, *inter alia*, underscored the importance of continued active and collaborative involvement of all relevant bodies of the United Nations system in the implementation of Agenda 21¹ and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21,² and requested the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with all relevant bodies of the United Nations system and taking into account the outcome of the deliberations of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to submit to the Assembly for its consideration at future sessions, through the Economic and Social Council in view of its coordination function, an analytical report on measures taken within the United Nations system to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, including identification of constraints and recommendations on how to address those constraints.

2. In follow-up to this request of the General Assembly, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), at its thirteenth meeting (New York, 8 and 9 March 1999), discussed the scope of and agreed on the modalities for preparation of such reports (see ACC/1999/1). The Committee felt that such a report would not attempt to provide a comprehensive annual assessment of United Nations system-wide activities in the field of sustainable development (since such assessments were carried out for the Commission on Sustainable Development in relation to specific themes in the Commission's agenda and also in the context of "five-year reviews"), but should rather summarize the efforts undertaken in the United Nations system to implement Agenda 21 and the outcome of the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly and highlight the main conclusions reached by IACSD and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) that needed to be brought to the attention of member States in the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly. Consequently, it was agreed that the reports would not describe activities carried out by United Nations organizations but should focus on strategic matters related to collaboration within the United Nations system in the field of sustainable development, analyse the main challenges and constraints in that area and provide a brief update of actions required in follow-up to the work of

the Commission and other intergovernmental bodies, as appropriate.

I. Work under way in the United Nations system to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, adopted by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session in 1997

Background

3. In November 1992, ACC established, as its standing subsidiary body, IACSD. The main goals of IACSD would be to promote cooperation and joint action within the United Nations system with a view to supporting the implementation of Agenda 21 and other outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, as well as to ensure coordinated responses from the United Nations system to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and other intergovernmental bodies and processes in the area of sustainable development.

4. IACSD has adopted an innovative approach to meeting these tasks through the establishment of the task managers system. Such a system, which works under the general oversight of IACSD, is based on a decentralized allocation of responsibilities for coordination, facilitating information exchange and fostering joint action to those United Nations agencies whose mandates are particularly relevant to, and that have a critical mass of in-house expertise in particular thematic areas of, Agenda 21 and which, accordingly, are best placed to act as system-wide task managers in these areas. While in most programmatic areas of Agenda 21, the role of the task manager is performed by an individual organization or agency, in those areas that cross-cut the mandates and programmes of several organizations of the United Nations system, the function of the task manager is performed by an inter-agency group. This is the case for the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, and the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas.

5. In 1997, as part of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly which carried out a five-year assessment of progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, IACSD undertook a critical review of the experiences gained in the United Nations system in the area of sustainable

development. The results of this work were brought to the attention of the Assembly in the statement by ACC to the Assembly at its nineteenth special session (A/S-19/6, annex). In this statement, ACC underscored that the concept of sustainable development provided an over-arching policy framework for the entire spectrum of United Nations system-wide activities at the global, regional and country levels (para. 2), and called for the implementation of interrelated policies promoting economic development, improved social equity and environmental sustainability.

6. The General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, called for strengthening of IACSD of ACC and its system of task managers, with a view to further enhancing system-wide intersectoral cooperation and coordination for the implementation of Agenda 21 and for the promotion of coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences in the area of sustainable development (para. 120).

7. Analysis of ongoing work in the United Nations system aimed at accelerating progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 is contained below.

Recent developments in IACSD

8. IACSD continuously underscored the importance of effective translation of the outcomes of policy deliberations in the Commission on Sustainable Development and in other relevant intergovernmental bodies into implementation activities of the organizations of the United Nations system, including those at the regional and country levels. Accordingly, at its twelfth (September 1998) and thirteenth (March 1999) meetings, IACSD considered, in addition to several standing items in its agenda such as those related to the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development as well as preparations for the Commission's forthcoming sessions, a number of issues that were of a more long-term nature and had a direct practical bearing on strengthening the joint capacity of the United Nations system to support various global-, regional- and national-level activities aimed at further implementation of Agenda 21. These included:

(a) Developing new or rationalizing existing guidelines used by international organizations in their policy advisory services and technical cooperation, including training, and activities in support of national-level work in such areas as (i) development and implementation of national sustainable development strategies; (ii) integrated

approach to land and water management; (iii) integration of sustainability concerns in national fiscal instruments; (iv) sustainable tourism; and (v) local sustainable development initiatives;

(b) Strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations system's capacity to collect and disseminate information on sustainable development and making it more accessible to various users, particularly national Governments. This included work related to the development and application of indicators, including indicators of sustainable development, that would facilitate measuring progress towards the implementation of the integrated and coordinated follow-up of all aspects of major United Nations conferences and summits;

(c) Strengthening United Nations system coverage of waste management issues, including the elaboration of a common approach in the United Nations system in this area;

(d) Undertaking measures aimed at avoiding multiple inter-agency mechanisms of policy coordination at the global level in any given thematic area, through broadening the current system of task managers and clarifying the division of labour between the standing committees of ACC, such as IACSD and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), so as to ensure, on the one hand, that the results of policy discussions in IACSD would be effectively translated by CCPOQ into specific modalities of United Nations system collaboration at the country level; and, on the other, that experiences gained in the work of CCPOQ would be regularly submitted to IACSD.

Recent developments in other inter-agency processes

Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy

9. In response to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, IACSD, at its twelfth meeting in September 1998, decided to establish an Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy with a view to ensuring a collaborative contribution of all relevant organizations of the United Nations system to the Commission on Sustainable Development process on energy and sustainable development. A preliminary report on the United Nations system-wide work plan on energy prepared for the ninth session of the Commission was reviewed by IACSD at its thirteenth meeting and subsequently IACSD requested the Task Force to finalize the preparation of a system-wide work plan on energy, atmosphere and transport for the period up

to 2001. The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 8 April 1999 at New York, in conjunction with the first session of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development.

10. Members of the Task Force agreed that activities to be undertaken were complementary and mutually supportive and that duplication of work, such as that undertaken by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,³ should be avoided. Coordination and information-sharing are a prerequisite of the system. Members agreed that the advantages and disadvantages of energy options, the impact of energy from a social, economic and environment perspective and due consideration of the role of stakeholders, including the scientific and academic communities, should be made an integral part of the common approach. Task Force members reviewed activities currently under way and/or planned by them in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. To enhance coordination and promote synergies among these activities and to better prepare for the ninth session of the Commission, it was decided to establish an electronic network. Task Force members agreed to provide updated information on ongoing and envisioned work so that a matrix of United Nations activities geared towards the ninth session of the Commission could be established.

11. The information will also be used for reports of the Secretary-General, to be prepared in support of the preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and submitted for consideration by the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, as requested by the Commission at its seventh session. The Task Force will meet again in autumn 1999. This meeting will consider the state of preparations for the first meeting of the ad hoc Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development and review the first draft of the study entitled "World Energy Assessment" currently prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the World Energy Council.

Inter-agency work in support of the implementation of the outcome of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests of the Commission on Sustainable Development and in support of the Commission's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests

12. The informal, high-level Inter-agency Task Force on Forests (ITFF) was created in 1995 to provide coherent support to the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently to the Commission's Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), by organizations within and outside the United Nations system. ITFF has provided support to the IPF/IFF process through: secondment of staff to the Secretariat; lead agency responsibility for preparation of draft reports of the Secretary-General and background documents; cooperation with Government-led initiatives in support of the programme of work of IPF/IFF; and implementation of IPF's proposals for action addressed to international organizations. In preparation for the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, ITFF produced a joint plan for implementation of IPF's proposals for action entitled "Inter-agency partnership on forests: implementation of IPF proposals for action by the ITFF". This plan is currently being implemented to the extent possible. However, it is also being revised by ITFF in light of limited donor support. Recently, ITFF has embarked on other activities, for example, a joint multi-agency activity on forest fires, not included in the IFF mandate.

II. United Nations system response to the outcomes of the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

Freshwater

13. In response to the main decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session in the field of freshwater, the organization members of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, at its nineteenth session (see ACC/1998/18), made the following decisions:

(a) To provide briefings to interested delegations during the annual sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the work of the Subcommittee in general and, in particular, on the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of its annual session. It was also decided that the annual reports of the Subcommittee would

be posted on the home page of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat on the Internet;

(b) To obtain the services of a consultant to assist the Subcommittee in reviewing its methods of work and to recommend ways in which the Subcommittee could enhance its coordination role, improve the transparency and visibility of its work and become more proactive in accelerating the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. The outcome of this exercise will be contained in a report of the Secretary-General to be submitted to the Commission at its eighth session;

(c) To begin the joint preparation of a report of the Secretary-General on progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the 1990s, to be submitted to the Commission at its eighth session, the substantive session of 2000 of the Economic and Social Council and the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 50/126 of 20 December 1995. The major aims of the report will be: (i) to provide up-to-date information on both water supply and sanitation coverage around the world, (ii) to evaluate the progress made in attaining the ultimate goal of providing safe water supply and sanitation for all, and (iii) to provide proposals for further action, particularly in developing countries and those with economies in transition;

(d) To coordinate and intensify efforts of the United Nations system at the country level, for example, efforts to reduce arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh and India;

(e) To invite the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to enhance its cooperation with the United Nations system partners in the freshwater area, including in the implementation of the Global International Waters Assessment;

(f) To begin the preparation of a periodic World Water Development Report (WWDR) — along the lines of the *Human Development Report* — the first edition of which would be published in 2002 to coincide with the 10-year review of chapter 18 of Agenda 21. A first meeting of the core group of the WWDR (New York, February 1999) drafted the corresponding terms of reference and a follow-up expert meeting will be held in mid-1999 to finalize a concrete proposal for the publication of the WWDR.

Transfer of environmentally sound technology

14. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session, in decision 6/3,⁴ called for work by the United Nations system, in particular by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, UNEP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), on a range of issues, including: transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs); policies to promote sustainable production; national technology strategies; development of voluntary guidelines on technology partnerships; eco-efficiency; and environmental management at the enterprise level. The United Nations system is continuing and expanding existing activities and undertaking a number of new activities in accordance with that decision.

15. In 1998, UNEP and UNIDO continued development of their Cleaner Production Centres in developing countries. UNEP organized the Fifth International High-Level Seminar on Cleaner Production (Phoenix Park, Republic of Korea), which prepared an International Declaration on Cleaner Production. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, organized an expert meeting on technology partnerships and capacity-building, and published the Advanced Technology Alert System (ATAS) XI report on that topic. UNCTAD and UNEP organized expert meetings on corporate "green" accounting and reporting. For 1999, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in cooperation with other agencies, is organizing a regional expert meeting on national cleaner technology strategies, and an expert meeting on corporate environmental accounting. UNCTAD, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, is preparing a publication on publicly owned technologies, drawing on the results of the 1998 expert meeting organized by the Republic of Korea. UNEP is undertaking a project to promote cleaner production investment in developing countries. UNDP, UNIDO, UNEP and other bodies are continuing to provide technical assistance to member States for the development, transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and its implementing agencies (UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank) are assisting countries in the development and transfer of technologies in support of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The GEF and its implementing agencies also support developing country

clearing-house mechanism focal points of the Convention on Biological Diversity⁵ with respect to implementing their national biodiversity information infrastructure. Other activities include work carried out by the International Trade Centre in close cooperation with the World Trade Organization, UNEP and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) on the implications of the World Trade Organization agreements on international trade in EST and related products. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is preparing an inventory of United Nations system activities for the implementation of Commission on Sustainable Development decision 6/3.

Capacity-building, education and public awareness and science for sustainable development

16. At its fourth session in 1996, the Commission on Sustainable Development initiated a work programme for the implementation of chapter 36 of Agenda 21 on education, public awareness and training. An expanded version of this work programme was adopted by the Commission at its sixth session in 1998. The work programme consists of 7 subprogrammes and 23 tasks.

17. By decision of its General Conference in late 1997, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) fully integrated its support to the Commission on Sustainable Development work programme with its own programme and budget. Responsibility within UNESCO lies with the transdisciplinary project Educating for a Sustainable Future, created in 1994 as an experimental, cross-sectoral unit mandated to mobilize UNESCO's numerous educational programmes, member States and other key actors towards education for sustainable development, in the framework of the integrated follow-up to the United Nations conferences and conventions.

18. Since launching the work programme in 1996, much progress has been made in advancing a new vision of education, public awareness and training as key instruments for achieving sustainable development. UNESCO as task manager has given highest priority to clarifying the concept and content of education for sustainable development in a collective way, principally through the preparation of the document *Educating for a Sustainable Future: A Transdisciplinary Vision for Concerted Action* in which the entire United Nations system, the World Bank, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources — World Conservation Union (IUCN), the

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Organization of American States (OAS) and others participated.

19. Education, public awareness and training need to be integral components in regional, national and local strategies and plans. A survey of existing regional and national strategies and plans has been undertaken by UNESCO, in cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNDP, to determine the extent to which education has been adequately addressed. The survey is to be published in 1999. The Education for All Assessment 2000 for basic education, being conducted by UNESCO and its partners within the follow-up to the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, will provide insight to countries for the review of national policies and the reform of educational systems.

20. UNESCO has continued to develop the International Registry of Innovative Practices Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training for Sustainability, in cooperation with the Government of the United States of America, Environment-Canada and the Canadian Man and the Biosphere Programme. The registry will provide a clearing-house mechanism consisting of nodes developed with a common protocol.

21. Efforts have been focused on implementing the articles concerning education within the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (A/49/84/Add.2, annex, appendix II), and on creating synergies among these conventions. Since the sixth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, UNESCO, UNEP and IUCN as well as the secretariats of the conventions have begun a number of initiatives along these lines, targeted to specific countries or regions or to specific groups or sectors of society.

22. The World Conference on Science (Budapest, 26 June–1 July 1999) organized jointly by UNESCO and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) will pay particular attention to enhancing the role of science for sustainable development. The Conference organizers have proposed that the Science Agenda: Framework for Action to be adopted by the Conference include major action recommendations aimed at providing increased support to the further implementation of chapter 35 and the science-related components of many other chapters of Agenda 21.

Industry

23. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its sixth session called for a multi-stakeholder process to identify the key elements of a review of voluntary initiatives. Such a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting was organized with participants from business, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and selected Governments as well as representatives from UNEP and OECD in Toronto, Canada (10–12 March 1999). UNEP was a partner United Nations agency in the multi-stakeholder steering committee that led the preparations for this meeting. The report of the Toronto meeting (E/CN.17/1999/12) was prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in collaboration with UNEP and UNIDO. Future follow-up in this area will involve joint or separate actions by the stakeholder groups to generate further information on the impact and effectiveness of voluntary initiatives and agreements, with assistance from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNEP, UNIDO, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other relevant United Nations bodies, as appropriate.

III. Outcomes of the seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development that call for action by the United Nations system

24. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session adopted a number of decisions and recommendations that call for strengthened cooperation and interaction in the United Nations system. These outcomes of the Commission will be reviewed at the forthcoming fourteenth meeting of IACSD, as well as at the next meetings of relevant inter-agency bodies with a view to agreeing on the most effective course of action. The main results of the Commission's seventh session relevant to the work of the United Nations system are outlined below.

Oceans and seas

25. The Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session addressed oceans and seas as its sectoral theme and adopted a comprehensive decision including recommendations for action by the United Nations system. The Commission noted that, because of the complex and interrelated nature of oceans and seas, there was a special need for international coordination and cooperation on the

subject. The Commission called for a more integrated approach, building on existing arrangements, to address all legal, economic, social and environmental aspects of oceans and seas. The Commission invited the Secretary-General to undertake measures to ensure better coordination of the United Nations work on oceans and seas and to suggest initiatives to improve coordination and integration.

26. The Commission invited the Secretary-General, working in cooperation with the executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system, to undertake measures to improve the effectiveness of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas, including through making the work of the Subcommittee more transparent and responsive to member States.

27. The Commission expressed grave concern over the slow progress on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (A/51/116, annex II). It welcomed the recent decision of the UNEP Governing Council (decision 20/19 B) of 5 February 1999 in which the Governing Council stressed the need for urgent measures aimed at expediting progress in the implementation of the Global Programme of Action; and reiterated its appeal to the governing bodies of relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to review their role in, and contribution to, the implementation of the Global Programme of Action. The Commission invited those organizations to provide information on progress in this area for inclusion in the annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly.

28. The Commission invited all organizations concerned with aspects of the oceans to consider whether their programmes of work provided sufficient consideration of the potential impact of increased climate variability, and to review what needed to be done to ensure adequate prediction and understanding of the impacts on coastal and marine areas of phenomena such as El Niño. The Commission also endorsed the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) call to action, urging implementation of complementary actions by States, intergovernmental organizations and other bodies, in particular the Convention on Biological Diversity, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

29. The Commission reiterated its call for the sponsoring organizations of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) to review the Group's methods of work with a view to improving its effectiveness and inclusiveness, while maintaining its status as a source of agreed, independent scientific advice. The Commission welcomed plans for an

August 1999 inter-secretariat meeting called by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as administrative secretariat of GESAMP, to review the Group's terms of reference and modus operandi.

30. The Commission recommended that the General Assembly establish a consultative process on oceans and seas, taking into account inputs from United Nations system bodies. The Commission further suggested that the Assembly should work to strengthen the existing structures and mandates within the United Nations system in this area. The results of the Commission's review of oceans and seas will be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

Tourism and sustainable development

31. The Commission adopted an international work programme on sustainable tourism development calling for a variety of activities to be undertaken by Governments, the tourism industry, other major groups and international organizations. The Commission urged Governments to support initiatives of organizations like ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO) that would contribute to sustainable tourism.

32. The Commission called on Governments, major groups and the United Nations system, in close collaboration with the World Tourism Organization, and building on work by UNEP, UNESCO, UNCTAD, ILO and UNDP, and in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States,⁶ to consider a number of initiatives and to keep the Commission on Sustainable Development informed on progress achieved.

33. The Commission called for development of sustainable tourism to increase benefits for host communities and maintain their cultural and environmental integrity and for efforts to encourage more responsible behaviour among tourists. The Commission called for activities in support of the International Year of Ecotourism, the International Year of Mountains and the International Coral Reef Initiative.

34. The Commission called for assessment of voluntary initiatives and guidelines relating to sustainable tourism, and for cooperation with UNEP in developing guiding principles for sustainable tourism development. Consideration should also be given to establishing a global information network on sustainable tourism, taking into account the work of the World Tourism Organization, regional mechanisms and major groups.

35. The Commission invited the World Tourism Organization to consider the participation of major groups in the development of its global code of ethics for tourism. The Commission invited IMO and other agencies to evaluate whether existing regulations and compliance on marine pollution were sufficient to protect fragile coastal zones. The Commission invited the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to further consider existing knowledge and best practice on sustainable tourism and biological diversity with a view to contributing to international guidelines for activities related to sustainable tourism development in vulnerable ecosystems and habitats.

36. The Commission invited the United Nations Secretariat and the World Tourism Organization, in consultation with major groups and other international organizations, to facilitate the establishment of a working group on tourism to assess financial leakages and determine how to maximize benefits for indigenous and local communities, and to prepare a joint initiative to improve information availability and capacity-building.

Consumption and production patterns

37. The Commission at its seventh session reaffirmed that the principal goals of changing consumption and production patterns should be pursued by all countries, with the developed countries taking the lead. The Commission noted that the overriding issues of poverty eradication and changing consumption and production patterns should be addressed in the context of the consideration of agriculture, financial resources, trade and investment in 2000, and energy and transport in 2001.

38. The Commission decided that activities under the Commission's existing international work programme on sustainable consumption and production patterns should continue, and that consideration should be given to four new priority areas: (a) effective policy development and implementation; (b) natural resource management and cleaner production; (c) globalization and its impacts on consumption and production patterns; and (d) urbanization and its impacts on consumption and production patterns.

39. In the area of natural resource management and cleaner production, the Commission called for efforts to promote public and private investments in cleaner production, eco-efficiency and the sustainable use of natural resources, taking into account the work of the World Tourism Organization. The Commission called on UNEP and UNIDO, through their Cleaner Production Centres, to

enhance their support to enterprises in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

40. The Commission called for studies of the impacts of globalization, including trade, investment and the role of the financial sector in promoting sustainable consumption and production. In the area of urbanization, the Commission called for work on urban energy, transport, water, sanitation, waste management, public health, and city planning and management, with particular reference to the work of the Commission on Human Settlements.

IV. Constraints faced by the United Nations system in the field of sustainable development and recommendations on how to address these constraints

41. Additional tasks such as those implied in many decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development cannot be implemented fully by individual United Nations agencies without additional resources. For example, no additional resources have been provided for the Commission work programme on education, public awareness and training for sustainable development. UNESCO, as task manager for this work programme — which spans not only the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development but all of the major United Nations conferences — has not had recourse to additional resources to reinforce its capacity to further this work programme. Along the same lines, there exists the need for necessary financial and human resources to implement the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA), as was recently recognized by the Governing Council of UNEP. Governments and respective governing and budgetary bodies should be encouraged to work together to provide the resources to implement their decisions particularly at the outset. Similarly, as reported in paragraph 12 above, limited donor support led to a number of serious difficulties in the implementation by organizations forming the Inter-agency Task Force on Forests of proposals for action adopted by the Commission's Intergovernmental Panel on Forests.

42. Other constraints for the United Nations system are related to the lack of institutional capacity, vague mandates and roles, and lack of clearly defined priorities, both for individual organizations and for the United Nations system as a whole, as sometimes determined by intergovernmental decisions. The United Nations system is attempting to

address these issues through various inter-agency consultative processes and consultations, the results of which often need to be reported back to respective governing bodies in order that clearer guidance may be solicited. Organizations of the United Nations system are also undertaking steps towards streamlining sometimes lengthy and bureaucratic procedures, and promoting better managerial practices and greater motivation of staff. Such measures could go a long way towards helping agencies to address their responsibilities in a more efficient and effective way.

43. There is often a perception that the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other United Nations conferences is primarily the responsibility of the United Nations system in general, and of task managers in particular. It needs to be emphasized that actions need to take place primarily at national level, with Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and others as the main actors. The role of the United Nations system is, *inter alia*, to facilitate cooperation among major actors to enhance action at national level.

44. Some of the constraints are related to inconsistent decisions in various governing bodies of organizations of the United Nations system. As noted in section III above, a matter of considerable concern to Governments meeting in the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Governing Council of UNEP and elsewhere has been the slow rate of progress in implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA). While States are responsible for the overall implementation of the Global Programme of Action at the national and, as appropriate, regional and global levels, with respect to the clearing-house mechanism (that is to say, a referral system providing access to current sources of information, practical experiences, and scientific and technical expertise, as well as possible funding sources), United Nations agencies and organizations are expected to take lead responsibility for a number of specific pollutant source categories, as defined in General Assembly resolution 51/189 of 16 December 1996. The development of the clearing house has been hindered, however, by the fact that the governing bodies of only three agencies (WHO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNESCO/Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) have adopted resolutions in support of the Global Programme of Action, and WHO, IMO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have indicated they would be unable to take the lead agency role for their respective source categories without additional financial

resources. On the other hand, it should be noted that, in addition to responsibilities defined for these by Assembly resolution 51/189, IAEA, UNESCO/IOC and UNEP have joined forces in an active inter-agency programme on marine pollution, providing data quality assurance services to regional programmes and national laboratories. Governments are therefore urged to follow up their agreement, as contained in Assembly resolution 51/189, UNEP Governing Council decisions 19/14 A of 7 February 1997⁷ and 20/19 B, and in the decisions of the fourth and seventh sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, to take the necessary action within the governing bodies of relevant United Nations agencies and organizations to ensure that these organizations have the mandate for, and give appropriate priority to, the implementation of the Global Programme of Action.

45. A number of specific difficulties are related to fostering progress in some intersectoral aspects of sustainable development, such as health. Health is too often understood only in terms of medical services and as the responsibility of the Ministry of Health. At the country level, government health services have been cut back in many countries in the context of economic reforms, including structural adjustment. Health sector reforms have focused on ensuring financial viability of health-care services, often resulting in a neglect of public and environmental health. The United Nations system needs to address health issues, particularly those related to preventive health, in relation to sustainable development. Health professionals need to be better informed of the linkages between health and development, and professionals in other sectors need to be informed of the relationship between their sectoral issues and health. Consideration of health issues needs to be strengthened in sustainable development planning, in particular through impact assessment. WHO working in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies is undertaking activities to improve understanding of the links between health and various development activities, as well as global issues such as the health impacts of climate change, and development issues such as natural resource management and land-use changes.

46. Finally, a more coordinated approach to the follow-up of all recent major United Nations conferences is needed in order to achieve synergies and to ensure a more efficient and effective use of limited resources. This requires greater efforts, taking fully into account the outcomes of relevant deliberations in the Economic and Social Council, aimed at promoting more effective coordination of both policy development and implementation activities at all levels: in the United Nations system, within national Governments and

among various non-governmental constituencies involved in this work. As for the United Nations system, ACC, upon recommendations of ACC, has started a process aimed at expanding the task managers' system with a view to avoiding multiple inter-agency mechanisms of policy coordination at the global level. Among the goals of this endeavour is to consider effective ways of broadening the task managers' role from that of servicing and carrying out the mandates related to United Nations Conference on Environment and Development follow-up to one encompassing responsibility for facilitating overall collaboration in respective thematic areas on a system-wide basis, and incorporating in their work the mandates of other major conferences together with those of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Notes

¹ *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution I, annex II.

² General Assembly resolution S-19/2 of 28 June 1997, annex.

³ A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add. I and Corr. I, annex I.

⁴ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 9 (E/1998/29)*, chap. I, sect. B, decision 6/3.

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme, *Convention on Biological Diversity* (Environmental Law and Institution Programme Activity Centre), June 1992.

⁶ *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution I, annex II.

⁷ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/52/25)*, annex, decision 19/14 A.